

**A GREWSOME REVENGE**

By PETER C. DOHONOF

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In Russia there is a custom among the rural classes in certain regions which is very curious. Instead of a man asking a girl to marry him, a girl who wishes a man for a husband goes to his house and asks him to marry her. If he declines and turns her out her relatives will be revenged upon him, so she may stay on, if she likes, till he succumbs or concludes to take a thrashing from her big brother.

Peter Hazlevich while living in a region where it was customary for the man to propose met a young girl at a dance and afterward courted her. She listened to his lovemaking, expecting every day that he would propose to her. But Peter delayed and, finally meeting another girl he liked better, ceased his attentions to the first and bestowed them on the second.

Five years later Peter was living, a single man, among those people whose marriages were arranged by the woman's making the first advance. He had failed to win the second girl he had courted, and his attentions were not renewed to the first. Indeed, the jilted girl, Katherine Dronsky, gave every evidence that if he came courting her again he would catch a tartar.

One day Katherine, while attempting to kindle a fire by pouring kerosene oil on it, caused an explosion. She was badly burned, and on recovering her face was a mass of scars.

One day Peter was at work on his farm in his new home when he saw a woman go into his house. She being veiled, he could not see her face. At once he suspected that one of his neighbors was intending to make him a proposition of marriage. This disconcerted him, for he had not seen any woman in his neighborhood whom he would like to marry except one, whom he did not believe wanted him. But the thought that it might be she filled him with pleasure. At any rate, anxious to know who had favored him, he threw down his implements and went to the house.

There, standing in his living room, was Katherine Dronsky, the girl he had jilted.

This is what she said:

"Peter, hearing that you had come to this country, never having been able to conquer my love for you, I concluded to come too. We—my mother, my brothers and myself—have bought a farm near yours, and I, hearing of the custom of this country by which the girl instead of the man proposes marriage, have come to ask you to be my husband."

Peter quailed before the look she gave him—a look of hate, revenge, triumph. It froze the very marrow in his bones. He stood looking upon the horrible face confronting him like one paralyzed by a specter. He knew Katherine's brothers and that they had been bitter against him for his desertion of their sister and had she willed it would have punished him. Now, doubtless, they were ready to support her in this revenge she had evidently set her heart upon.

"You don't seem pleased to see me, Peter," the woman said scornfully. "I'm not so beautiful as I was when you courted me, but I have the same heart. At any rate, if there is any change of heart you have caused it, so yours is the fault. They tell me here that when a girl goes to a man's house to propose marriage she remains there if she likes till he accepts her. I have come here to stay."

She took off her wraps and, going to the fire, sat down before it. Peter stood for awhile wondering if it would do any good to throw himself on her mercy. But he decided otherwise. He went back to his work.

He had one hope—that since there was no one but himself in her house, no mother, no sister, perhaps Katherine would consider it improper to stay there with him, and she surely could not force him to make it proper by marrying her. There was an outhouse on the premises used for the storage of farm implements, and during the afternoon he saw Katherine carrying bedding and other furniture there. So this hope died in his breast. Instead it gave him a slight comfort. He would be free from her during the night.

And so the two entered upon a new life, the one of endurance, the other of revenge. Peter never spoke to her, and after her proposal she never spoke to him. She cooked her own food in the outhouse, and Peter cooked his in the farmhouse. Peter grew lean and haggard, and his eye after a time had the look of one whose mind is on the point of giving way. He worked on his farm from early morning till as late as he could see, never going into his house except for his meals. Katherine kept in her own quarters except for about an hour after Peter quit work, which she spent in the farmhouse with him.

One night the neighbors saw a lurid glare in the direction of Peter's house and, going there, found it on fire. Katherine rushed out of her quarters and, seeing the fire, called on Peter to come out. He came to a window, and she begged piteously for forgiveness. As soon as he saw her he disappeared and was seen no more. Katherine ran to the building and tried to enter, but those present held her. Then the roof fell in, and all knew that Peter Hazlevich had perished.

Katherine was taken away from that region and was never again heard of in those parts.

**Food For Infants.**

Friend—The examination you undergo for the position of teacher is very severe, is it not?

Scribble—Yes, indeed.

"What are the branches?"

"Well, today we were examined in psychology, integral calculus, mathematical astronomy, polemic divinity, metaphysical analysis and Greek versification."

"Indeed! What position are you competing for?"

"Instructor of the infant class."—Tit Bits.

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VALUE  
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